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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

November 1, 197[illegible]

Dear Senator Stevenson:

The Secretary has asked me to reply to your letter of September 26, in which you refer to our earlier exchange of correspondence on the USS Liberty incident of June 1967, and note your disappointment that the United States is not pursuing the claim against Israel for physical damages to the vessel itself.

I apologize for any confusion that may have arisen out of my August 23 reply. As I mentioned in that letter, the claim against Israel for adequate compensation for damage to the Liberty continues to be open, and in the judgment of the Department of State remains a valid obligation of the Government of Israel. No decision has been made not to pursue this claim as part of the general policy of U.S. support for Israel, and my remarks regarding the nature of such support were intended to provide a more complete picture of the U.S.-Israeli relationship, and not to establish a connection with the claims issue.

To give you additional background to the Liberty claims issue: as I indicated in my August 23 letter, this was separated into two components--individual claims against the Government of Israel for loss of life and injury in connection with the incident, which was satisfactorily settled by the payment of $6.7 million; and the U.S. Government claim for damage to the vessel, which amounted to $7.6 million. This latter claim was presented to the Government of Israel on July 1, 1968, and has been pressed on a number of occasions by the Department of State. The Israeli Government denied responsibility but offered to pay a nominal sum, which offer was rejected.

The Honorable
Adlai E. Stevenson III,
United States Senate.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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We will take an early occasion to press the claims issue and to remind the Government of Israel of its obligations in this regard. Our objective remains that of obtaining adequate compensation for the damages inflicted upon the Liberty in accordance with international law.

Sincerely,

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

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ADLAI E. STEVENSON
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

September 26, 1977

ACTION
is assigned to
NEA

The Honorable Cyrus Vance
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Vance:

On August 5 I wrote the Congressional Liason requesting the Department's position on the U.S. claim against Israel for damages inflicted to the U.S.S. Liberty in June 1967.

I was disappointed by a response, dated August 25, 1977, from Douglas J. Bennet, Jr. indicating that the United States was not pursuing this claim as part of its policy of supporting Israel.

Israel has recognized its responsibility for the consequences of its attack upon a warship of the United States by rendering some compensation to the human victims. I am surprised that the United States would acquiesce in such aggression against its property. If there is some justification for failing to pursue this claim I wish you would apprise me. U.S. aid is authorized by law; what authority exists in the law for failing to pursue this claim?

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

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